THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) There is a regular check by the Railways as well as Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC) at railway stations and on trains to ensure that only properly sealed water bottles are sold. Packaged drinking water brands for sale at railway stations have to follow stringent norms prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). Samples of packaged drinking water are also sent for analytical examination. Only those brands which are approved by BIS are permitted for sale to the passengers. Special drives are,launched from time to time to ensure that only BIS certified brands are sold to passengers.

Catering Services on Railway platforms

and in the Trains

4788. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether majority of catering activity on railways platforms and in trains is in the hands of private caterers;

(b) if so, the details in percentage terms;

(c) whether Government agree that there is much scope for improvement in this behalf in ordinary passenger/express trains; and

(d) the specific steps being taken to ensure quality food at the prescribed rates to passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. At present nearly 9% of Catering services over Indian Railways are managed departmentally arid rest are managed through private licencees.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Standardized hygienic foods and beverages are provided to passengers at Railways' pre-determined rates. Catering services are monitored by conducting regular inspection/surprise checks by the officials of Railways/Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. (IRCTC). Deficiencies detected are taken up suitably for remedial action.